

Post  
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# Newspaper Article Called

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House accused the Washington Post today of engaging in "character assassination" and "a vicious abuse of the journalistic process" in reporting on alleged political sabotage by the Republican party.

Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler was specifically critical of the lead story in Wednesday editions of the Post. The story quoted unnamed sources as saying H.R. Haldeman, President Nixon's chief of staff, was linked to a "secret fund" that the newspaper has said was used for espionage and sabotage efforts.

Democratic presidential nominee Sen. George McGovern said earlier Wednesday that the Post report of Haldeman's alleged involvement in sabotage and espionage "places the

whole ugly mess...right squarely in the lap of Richard Nixon.

Ziegler emphasized he was talking to newsmen "as a spokesman for the White House."

"This is a political effort by the Washington Post, well conceived and coordinated with the aim of discrediting this administration," said Ziegler.

In what was the most strongly worded White House blast against any publication in recent memory, Ziegler said of Post accounts of the alleged sabotage plot:

"This is a vicious abuse of the journalistic process. It is political and...a blatant effort at character assassination."

He accused the Post of "building hearsay upon hearsay" and in subsequent editions, turning rumor into fact

on its editorial page.

Ziegler also volunteered that Nixon's Democratic opponent, Sen. George McGovern, had commented earlier in the day on the Post report concerning Haldeman.

"It's a pattern that is being followed," said the Nixon spokesman.

Asked to explain the motivation he feels the Post has, Ziegler said it would not be difficult to establish that the newspaper's executive editor, Benjamin C. Bradlee, "is not a supporter of President Nixon."

Apart from denying that Haldeman had any connection with a secret fund, Ziegler insisted he has been informed that no such secret fund ever existed.

General Accounting Office investigators have reported that, earlier in the year, the Nixon

campaign organization maintained a cash fund of amounts up to \$700,000 that was kept in a safe in the office of former Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans, now finance chairman of the Nixon re-election campaign.

Asked to give the source of his statement that no secret fund existed, Ziegler said he had been so informed by John Dean III, White House special counsel who conducted an internal investigation for Nixon following the arrest of GOP operatives in the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee.

The Post said it had been told that Hugh W. Sloan Jr., former treasurer of the Nixon campaign, told a federal grand jury Haldeman was one of five men authorized to approve pay-

## 'Political'

ments from the reported cash fund.

The Post has not endorsed a presidential candidate.